

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name Sarah Eppler-Epstein, from New Haven. I'm an attorney at IRIS – Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services, where I work as part of the Connecticut Coalition for Immigrant Freedom.

I fully support SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. It is vital that Connecticut expand access to HUSKY up to age 18 for all Connecticut residents regardless of immigration status. Children up to age 18 need this protection now, and I strongly urge you to create a plan to expand healthcare access to ALL Connecticut residents, including parents and adults, as soon as possible.

As an attorney, I represent undocumented immigrants in their removal cases in immigration court. My colleagues and I fight for our clients' rights so that they can stay here in Connecticut, with their families. I represent my clients pro bono at a non-profit. The families we represent work very hard to put food on the table, have clothes and shelter, and other basic necessities. But going to the doctor is usually not a feasible option for them, without medical insurance.

I currently represent a child under the age of 8 who has had various serious health issues since coming to the United States, including Covid-19. He will benefit greatly from the bill passed last year. But once he turns 9 years old, he will age out of coverage unless S.B. 284 passes. His parents are also left out of care; if they get sick, they won't be able to get the care they need and in turn won't be able to care for their child.

I have several clients who have serious medical problems but who cannot afford necessary doctors' visits. I know families who have had to make terrible decisions between taking care of their children's health and paying for utilities or food.

Many of the individuals I work with have had traumatic experiences, either in their countries of birth or on the journey to the United States. My clients with severe PTSD cannot afford the mental health services they need out of pocket. For the children and teens I represent, I have seen how a lack of medical and mental health services can affect their ability to focus and thrive in school.

Healthcare needs to be a right, not a privilege in Connecticut. I wholeheartedly support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I also hope that the committee opens healthcare access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,  
Sarah Eppler-Epstein